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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 OSLO 000815

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TAGS: [IS](#) [KPAL](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [NO](#)

SUBJECT: HAMAS: MAIN THEME OF FM STOERE'S MID EAST TRIP

1.(C) SUMMARY: The issue of Norway,s contacts with Hamas dominated Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Stoere August 6-7 visit to Israel and the West Bank. Citing a & certain dynamism8 in events Stoere visited Israel with the goal of discussing the next meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) with the Israelis and President Abbas. Norway,s policy of dialogue with all parties at all times was criticized sharply in Stoere,s meetings with Israeli leaders. President Abbas also is opposed to contacts with Hamas, at least until certain conditions are met, but he welcomed Stoere,s initiative to mobilize the international donor community in preparation for the September 24 meeting of the AHLC. END SUMMARY

#### Visit Details

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¶2. (U) On the Israeli side FM Stoere met with President Peres, FM Livni, Minister of Defense Barak and several other members of Parliament. In the West Bank he met with President Abbas and PM Fayyad. Stoere traveled to the region as both the Norwegian FM and as the co-chair of the Middle East Committee of the Socialist International. However, it was the bilateral agenda which received the most attention.

#### Media Confusion Leads to Clarification of Norway,s Hamas Policy

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¶3. (C) Inaccurate media reports following Stoere,s meeting with President Peres, stating that Norway had ended its policy of contact with Hamas, led to Norway issuing a clarification on its policy of contact with Hamas. Boiled down to the essentials, Norway,s policy is that the GON says it will continue its diplomatic dialogue with Hamas at the official level (below political level) which has been ongoing since 1993. Political contacts were only developed during the brief time that the New Unity Government (NUG) was in place. Even then Norway held political meetings (Deputy FM Johansen,s meeting with Haniyeh for example) with Hamas figures only as Ministers of the NUG. Norway claims that Abbas asked them to deal directly with Hamas members of NUG and consider funding their ministries, etc. The MFA stated that with the breakup of the NUG Norway will no longer have political level contacts with Hamas, but will revert back to its previous position of continuing official level contacts. Norway,s stated baseline for their policy is to provide support for President Abbas. In practice, Norway,s contacts with Hamas are limited as Norway does not have a physical presence in Gaza and has no directly administered aid programs in Gaza. The MFA stated that Norway has held some talks with Hamas regarding Corporal Shalit but these were not with any negotiating mandate, merely a humanitarian effort.

#### Abbas, Perspective and Plans for the Fall

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¶4. (C) According to the MFA, Abbas told Stoere that he has ruled out dialogue with Hamas until it steps down in Gaza, apologizes and ceases its parallel administration and gives

up its arms. The Norwegians believe full acceptance of these terms is unlikely but they were encouraged by reports that lower level discussions between Fatah and Hamas were occurring and by recent visits of Jordanian and Egyptian officials to Gaza. The MFA did not directly comment on Abbas' position regarding Norway's policy of contact with Hamas.

15. (C) PM Fayyad and Stoere discussed plans for the fall donor meetings. The MFA reported that Fayyad stated that there is enough money in his budget for 2007 and the Sept 24 AHLC meeting in New York should primarily serve to lay the groundwork for a larger donor conference to be held in December. Assistance details will be worked out at the AHLC and follow up meetings. The Norwegians stated that invitations to the AHLC are being sent out now. The MFA said that all parties Stoere spoke with agreed that political questions should be handled by the Quartet and addressed in the November meeting announced in President Bush's July speech.

Norway and Israel Agree to Disagree

16. (C) In his meetings with Israeli leaders Stoere was criticized for Norway's Hamas contacts. In a briefing to the Oslo diplomatic corps the MFA admitted that Norway has had a difficult relationship with the present Israeli administration. According to the MFA, the Israelis stated that the collapse of the NUG has made it easier to talk with the Palestinians and Stoere was encouraged by the development of talks on agreement in principle on several issues. Stoere and his Israeli interlocutors agreed on the importance of the upcoming AHLC meeting and discussed a variety of other regional issues including growing Israeli concern over the rearming of Hezbollah (with Syrian arms) and the instability

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in Lebanon. Israeli increasingly is worried that Iran now has potential bases of operation and supportive organizations to the north (Lebanon and Hezbollah) and south (Gaza and Hamas) of Israel.  
WHITNEY